

# ANGLER GUIDE

## Sac River Basin

Streams in the Sac River basin provide numerous fishing opportunities. All three species of black bass are present. Smallmouth bass can be found in most streams in the eastern 2/3 of the basin where good cover (rootwads and boulders) and current meet. Some of the better smallmouth bass habitat can be found in Turnback Creek, Little Sac River, and the Sac River above Stockton Lake. Largemouth bass are found throughout basin streams usually near rootwads and logjams and in backwater areas away from strong currents. Spotted (Kentucky) bass are also widely distributed in the basin, but tend to become more abundant near Stockton Lake. Soft plastic baits, spinnerbaits, crankbaits, live crayfish, and minnows are all effective on black bass.

Excellent opportunities are also available to catch rock bass (goggle-eye). Fishing small, floating crayfish colored crankbaits, plastic jigs, or live bait (crayfish and worms) around woody cover or large boulders in flowing water should provide the best results.

Catfish are common in the streams and rivers of the Sac River basin. They are more concentrated in the mainstem Sac River than elsewhere in the basin. To catch channel catfish, fish around snags in deeper holes using a variety of natural or prepared baits.

As a result of the construction of major impoundments, the basin supports several fish species not commonly found in most small streams. Carp, buffalo, white bass, drum, flathead catfish, and other species can be found in streams near Stockton Lake and Harry S. Truman Reservoir and provide excellent, seasonal fishing opportunities.

Numerous public access sites are available throughout the basin on both streams and impoundments.

## Stockton Lake

Stockton Lake black bass surveys indicate that the black bass populations are thriving. Conditions favoring bass reproduction, bass angling success and good shad production suggest that black bass fishing will continue to be good. Largemouth bass is the dominant black bass species and is the species most often caught and harvested by anglers. Recent surveys have shown that good percentages of legal ( $\geq 15$ ") largemouth bass are available to anglers. Spotted bass and smallmouth bass are also present, but comprise smaller percentages of the black bass population, and provide fewer legal-sized fish.

Angler survey information indicates that walleye angling has improved greatly since stockings began and after the reduction of the minimum length limit to 15" on March 1, 2000. Fall electrofishing surveys provide evidence that walleye stockings that began in 1998 have been successful. Walleye stockings are scheduled in even numbered years at a rate of 25 to 30 small fingerlings per acre. Jigging with natural bait in 15-25' of water during mid-summer is one of the preferred techniques for catching walleye. Trolling bottom bouncers with natural bait and casting or trolling deep-running crankbaits can sometimes also be successful methods.

Crappie fishing is very popular on Stockton Lake. Both black and white crappie are present in the lake. Adequate crappie recruitment is a key to good crappie fishing in reservoirs, and Stockton is no exception. Limited recruitment in the late 1990s and early 2000s has resulted in a period of only fair crappie fishing.

As a general rule of thumb, a year of good recruitment is needed to provide crappie anglers with excellent fishing three years later. Best times to fish for crappie are during the spawning season in April and over brushpiles in late fall and winter. Jigs and minnows are the preferred baits.

The best white bass fishing occurs near, or in, Stockton's tributary streams from mid-March to the end of April. Anglers fishing the windy lake points in the fall can also expect successful white bass fishing trips. Crankbaits, spinner baits, buzz baits, and white jigs are good choices for catching white bass.

Both flathead catfish and channel catfish are present in the lake and, at times, provide good fishing, usually during the spawning season in June.

Bluegill should not be overlooked by Stockton anglers that enjoy pan fishing. Fishing pressure is light with good numbers of large fish available. Bluegill fishing is usually best during summer months using nightcrawlers or crickets in 12-20' of water.

Fifty fish habitat structures were constructed from shoreline trees and installed in 1994 and 1995. Trees have been added to some of these structures and additional structures have been constructed by Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) personnel. The structures continue to provide good areas to catch fish. A map with locations can be accessed on MDC's Website.

### **Fellows Lake**

Largemouth bass fishing should continue to be good. Data collected during recent spring sampling seasons indicate a good portion of the bass population is  $\geq 15"$ . Numbers of bass in the 12-15" protected slot length limit should remain good and will continue to provide excellent catch-and-release fishing.

Walleye can be caught fishing gravel points in the spring, the backs of coves in the summer using crappie jigs, nightcrawlers or minnows, and trolling deep-diving crankbaits across main lake points. The legal size limit for walleye is 15". Care taken during release will increase survival of sub-legal walleye.

Muskie fishing should be good. Most of the muskie fingerlings stocked during the fall of 1996 reached the legal length of 36" during 2000. Additional muskie fingerlings were stocked in 1999. Recent sampling revealed good muskie survival and growth. Muskie angling is best on cloudy days during the fall when cold fronts move through the area. Deep trolling may be effective during summer months. Fish bucktails or large plugs near structure and standing timber or aquatic vegetation. Muskie are occasionally caught as anglers fish for largemouth bass. Releasing muskie, both sub-legal and legal, at the water's edge will increase their chances for survival. Use needle-nose pliers to remove tackle from hooked muskie.

The channel catfish population has improved with increased numbers from 10-12". Preferred baits include chicken livers, nightcrawlers, and prepared baits.

Crappie anglers should expect fair fishing success. Although fishing success will be fair, most of the crappie caught will range from 7-9". Anglers still have an opportunity to catch quality (10-13") crappie, especially during the spring. Minnows and tube jigs are the preferred baits. During the summer, try crappie fishing around the coontail (aquatic vegetation) beds. Both white and black crappie are present.

Redear sunfish, a species often overlooked, commonly reach 10". Try earthworms or grubs over spawning beds during May or June.

Bluegill fishing is typically fair. Small pieces of worm and a bobber will still provide considerable fun for both young and old anglers alike.

Fish attractors, constructed from deciduous trees and installed in 1993, continue to provide good areas to catch fish. For a detailed map of their locations, contact the Missouri Department of Conservation in Springfield (417/895-6880).

Springfield City Utilities owns Fellows Lake and requires an annual boat permit. Boat motors are limited to 40 horsepower or less. A disabled accessible fishing dock is located on the northeast arm of the lake.

Information concerning fishing regulations is available in the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* or on MDC's Website.